

Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7344 of September 22, 2000

Gold Star Mother's Day, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America's Armed Forces have stood watch over our freedom for more than two centuries. They have held posts on lonely ridges, spent long days and nights at sea, and faced danger in the skies. They have sacrificed their youth, their time, and even their lives to sustain the foundation on which our country was built and to protect the democratic values that keep our country strong and free.

The mothers of these courageous men and women have also bravely stood watch—in homes once filled with the laughter of children—and waited for word from their loved ones. When the guns of battle fell silent, many mothers' homes were once again filled with the boisterous commotion of their children returning from distant lands. But the homes of Gold Star Mothers remained silent. Their children had made the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation, and Gold Star Mothers were left with the profound sorrow of their heartbreaking loss.

But America's Gold Star Mothers rose above their personal tragedy, and today they continue to stand watch over our Nation. Reaching out to improve the lives of others and to ensure that the noble contributions of their sons and daughters are not forgotten, they are powerful examples of service and sacrifice for us all. With dignity, courage, and compassion, they have worked to promote patriotism, foster peace and goodwill, and extend a helping hand to veterans and those in need. Their generosity of spirit has touched the lives of countless Americans and made certain that the selflessness their children demonstrated in service to our country remains a prominent part of our national character.

For their steadfast devotion to duty and their unwavering commitment to carrying on the proud legacy of their children, we honor these Gold Star Mothers each year. The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 115 of June 23, 1936 (49 Stat. 1895), has designated the last Sunday in September as "Gold Star Mother's Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Sunday, September 24, 2000, as Gold Star Mother's Day. I call upon all government officials to display the United States flag over government buildings on this solemn day. I also encourage the American people to display the flag and to hold appropriate meetings in their homes, places of worship, or other suitable places as a public expression of the sympathy and respect that our Nation holds for our Gold Star Mothers.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7345 of September 22, 2000

National Older Workers Employment Week, 2000

By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation

As a Nation, we are growing older, and so is our workforce. Today, there are 49 million workers in America aged 45 years or older—approximately 35 percent of America's labor force—and by 2008, that number will grow to 62 million, or about 40 percent of the workforce. One in four Americans between the ages of 65 and 69 has at least a part-time job, and 80 percent of the "baby boom" generation intends to keep working past the age of 65. Increasingly, older Americans want to work, and for most, the opportunity to work adds not only to the length but also to the quality of their lives.

The abilities, experience, and strong work ethic of these older Americans are a precious resource for our Nation in today's strong economy. With the unemployment rate at its lowest level in more than a generation, businesses urgently need to hire more workers if they are to keep pace with the demand for their products and services. Too often overlooked or underutilized, older workers offer employers a broad and diverse pool of talent.

Recognizing the importance of older workers to our Nation and our economy, the Congress unanimously passed, and I was proud to sign into law, the Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 2000. This legislation eliminates the Social Security retirement earnings test, a provision that withheld benefits from Americans working beyond the age of 65. It allows older Americans to enjoy the extra income and personal fulfillment that work offers without being penalized, and it ensures that companies facing labor shortages will have a greater supply of experienced workers. The Act will also help our economy grow without inflation and encourage Americans to work longer, thus contributing more to the tax base and to the Social Security trust fund at precisely the time when the percentage of younger workers paying into the system will be decreasing.

Older Americans have contributed much to the life of our Nation and to the extraordinary growth and prosperity we enjoy today. We owe them our respect and gratitude; we also owe them the opportunity to continue working as long as they desire. Through laws such as the Older Americans Act, which I have called on the Congress to reauthorize and strengthen, the Age Discrimination Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and now the Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act, the United States Government guarantees that opportunity. And, through the Senior Community Service Employment Program at the Department of Labor and the Administration on Aging at the Depart-